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REPORT OF EIGHTEENTH LAST



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Report of the committee to
whom was referred the
resolution of the House of
1815.

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REPORT
OF
THE COMMITTEE

TO WHOM WAS REFERRED

THE RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

OF

EIGHTEENTH MARCH LAST,

DIRECTING

An inquiry "whether any, and if any, what means of retrenchment and economy, and reform in the general management, and of extension and efficiency, in the naval establishment, may be expedient."

JANUARY 9, 1815.

READ AND ORDERED TO BE PRINTED.

WASHINGTON CITY:

PRINTED BY ROGER C. WEIGHTMAN.

1815.

REPORT.

The committee to whom was referred the resolution adopted by the house on the 18th of March last, directing the inquiry "whether any, and if any, what means of retrenchment and economy, and of reform in the general management, and of extension and efficiency, in the naval establishment, may be practicable and expedient, report:

That having considered the several important subjects referred to them, they do not deem it useful to exhibit to the house a detail of the various abuses which have prevailed in the naval establishment. Such a detail, though it might lead to the detection of individual delinquents, would not afford redress for former abuses, or prevent their repetition. For it was obvious to your committee, that these abuses were either sanctioned by the forms of law, or for the want of adequate provisions and penalties in the law, must remain unpunished. After having examined and availed themselves of the labors of their predecessors, in their investigations, made under the directions of this house, and referred to this committee, they have concluded that it is unnecessary and unprofitable, further to extend that investigation, and that it would be more satisfactory to the house, and more promotive of the object of their appointment, to limit their efforts to "a reform in the general management of this establishment," under a full conviction that the experience of this war has already satisfied the

most scrupulous, of the ability of this country to creat and equip a naval force, competent, not only to the defence of our extensive maritime frontier, but also for the great annoyance of a foreign enemy; and that such a force is now equally demanded by every section of our country, as indispensable for its security. The committee have likewise deemed it unnecessary to go into an argument, to show the propriety of bestowing upon this branch of our national force, that measure of increase and support which its brilliant exploits on the ocean, and on the lakes, and its efficiency in annoying the trade of the enemy, during this war, under all the abuses to which it has been exposed, have shown, should only be limited by our means.

The opinion that has existed from the first establishment of this department, and been declared successively by almost every secretary, that the duties incumbent on them, were greater and more diversified, than the most capable and laborious could discharge, with honor to himself, and justice to the nation, led the committee to an examination of the system, as now established, and the abuses that resulted from it. In prosecution of this examination, especially on that part which applies to the detail of service, they have principally relied on the information derived from the intelligent and experienced officers of the navy, whom they have always found ready and desirous of giving all the information in their power. By the information obtained from this and other sources, the committee are convinced that most, if not all the abuses complained of, are attributable to three distinct causes:

First. The excessive and laborious duties of the secretary:

Second. The want of sufficient checks upon, and the consequent irresponsibility of, subordinate agents:

Third. The great latitude allowed commanders, in altering, repairing, and furnishing, their ships.

It is presumed to be unnecessary to offer to the house any further evidence of this statement than is contained in the following extract from the report of the late secretary of the navy, made to the senate of the United States on the 15th November last:

4th page. "But regulations however correct and adequate to the end, become nugatory, or worse, unless the authority and the means are coextensive and competent to enforce the execution, or punish the violation thereof. This may account for the nonexistence of many wholesome regulations in the civil administration of the navy of the United States, and for the imperfect execution of those which exist: breaches of the latter too frequently escape with impunity, *from the impossibility of the head of the department taking cognizance of all the multifarious concerns of the establishment.*"

Great and obvious as the defects in this establishment are by all confessed to be, the committee have felt no little anxiety as to the best mode of correcting them. Desirous equally of avoiding the opposite errors, of rashly changing from one system to another, without an attempt to correct known abuses, or loading it with formal but inefficient appendages, which more frequently incumber than relieve, or give energy to its operations: and, concurring in the opinion expressed by the late secretary, in the report before referred to, that a board composed of intelligent and experienced officers, in aid of the executive of this department, would most effectually accom-

plish this object, and if properly organized avoid the dangers from too great innovation on one hand, and inefficiency on the other, they directed a copy of his report to be forwarded to every captain in the navy of the United States, with the annexed circular marked A. From the answers thereto, which invariably approve the general design, it was thought unnecessary to publish more than those which contained particular observations upon the plan submitted. These are annexed, numbered 1 to 8.

From these materials, collected from intelligent and practical sources, the committee have endeavored to digest a plan, which they unanimously believe, if adopted, will immediately correct many of the abuses complained of, and lay the foundation of an improved system for the management of this department. They therefore beg leave to recommend the adoption of the two bills accompanying this report.

DOCUMENTS ACCOMPANYING REPORT.

Copy of a circular to the captains in the navy.

(Circular.) Washington, Nov. 17, 1814.

SIR—I am directed by the committee appointed under a resolution of the house of representatives, adopted on the 15th of March last, “authorizing and directing an inquiry into the expediency and practicability of reform in the naval department of the United States,” to forward, for your examination, a letter from the secretary of the navy to the senate of the United States, of the 15th, communicating his views and plans for effecting this object, and to request you to favor the committee with your opinion of the plan proposed by the secretary, and to suggest such additions and alterations as shall appear to you necessary for attaining this desirable object.

With respect,
I am, sir,
Your very obedient servant.

Letter from commodore Bainbridge to the chairman of a committee of congress.

Observations submitted to the naval committee, on the report of the secretary of the navy to the senate of the United States, dated the 15th November, 1814, relative to the better organization of the navy of the United States.

1st. I should, for the reasons which follow, recommend three instead of five navy inspectors, that they be taken from the captains in the navy, and

that the officer of the oldest date of commission should preside. 1st. I believe that three inspectors are adequate to the performance of the duties contemplated, and this number will be sufficient to form a quorum. If it should be said, that by confining the board to the number of three, it might be rendered incompetent by the death or disability of a member, it may be replied, that while the president has the power of supplying the deficiency from the captains in the navy, this objection can have no force. 2dly. I recommend the appointment of navy officers in preference to gentlemen out of the navy, who may be skilled in naval affairs, because, in a science in which, of all others, experience has set theory at defiance, practical men only should be allowed to act; and I firmly believe the officers of the navy, after many years of experience in the naval service, and of constant reflection on the subject, are better qualified to execute the duties required, than any other characters. 3d. The officer whose commission is of the oldest date, should preside, because, by such an arrangement, no offence could be given to individual feeling, and that union and harmony would be preserved, which are so necessary to ensure a co-operation of mind and action.

2d. I should recommend the following alteration in the fourth section: instead of the secretary of the navy preparing the rules and regulations for conducting the business of the naval constructor's department, that that duty be assigned to the board of inspectors, who would always be professional men, and thereby judges of the matter. And it might happen that the secretary of the navy would not be a nautical character.

3d. The respective duties designated in the five classes, it appears to me, would be much better

conducted under the general direction of the board, than could be done under the separate direction of the respective members: inasmuch as the greater part of the duties detailed therein, are specified in the general duties of the board, and the whole are placed under its control: and more especially as a considerable part would require, for the public interest, the united talents of the board. And should it be found from experience which is the only test, that a select distribution of duties ought to be made among the members of the board, with due deference I suggest, that the board would be enabled from actual experiment, to recommend the best classification of duties for each inspector. A system so complicated and extensive, as a perfect organization of the civil department of the navy, cannot be expected, even under the direction of the best talents, to be the work of a day. But the want of some uniform system in the naval department of our country, has evidently manifested itself; and the adoption of the general principles for such a system, as recommended by the honorable secretary of the navy, I doubt not, would be attended with the most favorable result.

WM. BAINBRIDGE.

Letter from captain Decatur to the chairman of a committee of congress.

New York, December 1, 1814.

SIR—Circumstances have prevented me from replying until now to your letter accompanying the report of the secretary of the navy, on the subject of a new organization of that department. The objects of reform contemplated in that report, being those on which I had heretofore communicated my ideas, I shall merely remark, in compli-

ance with your request, upon the only subject which remains, namely, the organization of the board of inspectors as recommended by the secretary.

It appears to be the intention of that officer, that the board is to be so constituted, as simply to exercise such powers as may be delegated to them by the secretary of the navy, and approved by the president of the United States, and that it is not to be located at the seat of government.

After having maturely considered the subject in every point of view that presented itself to my mind, it appears to me that the object contemplated would be attained much more effectually, by so constituting this board, that the secretary of the navy should be its presiding officer, and the members his counsellors, with whom he might, and would be expected to consult, in all those affairs which they would be supposed, from their professional experience, to be better acquainted with than himself. I say better acquainted, because it is presumed that the secretary will not generally be a person thoroughly versed in the details of the service. The members of the board thus constituted, might, in addition to the duties of counsellors, exercise the respective powers contemplated in the report, and as effectually execute the duties of inspectors and comptrollers of abuses, as if they formed a separate and distinct establishment placed in a central part of the United States, and having their separate districts particularly defined.

By this arrangement, the secretary of the navy might at all times, and at the instant, have the advice of one or more competent officers, responsible for their counsel and conduct, and with whom he could at all times consult, without incurring the delay which would result from placing the board

at a distance from its head. There is always an advantage in hearing and comparing the different opinions of experienced men on every subject. Letters must of necessity be less particular and explanatory than verbal communications, and it is much more easy to come at the whole truth by the latter medium.

In short, sir, I can conceive no advantages that can result from placing this board in a central situation that will counterbalance the probable disadvantages of the arrangement contemplated in the report of the secretary. One principal object of this arrangement, appears to me, ought to be to bring into the department the experience and activity of a number of professional men, who should be at all times ready on the spot, to furnish either congress or the secretary with such information as either might call for, and which their professional experience enabled them to communicate.

The board, with the exception of the secretary of the navy, should consist of naval officers exclusively, of a grade not inferior to post captains, and composed of not more than three in number, as that would, I think, be fully competent to the discharge of all the duties required. A greater number might tend rather to embarrass and retard, and would take from the navy, officers that, on some occasions, could not be spared from the service. These officers to be selected by the president of the United States, and changed as he should find it expedient. The accountant and clerks of the navy department, to remain as heretofore under the secretary of the navy, who should be the only disbursing officer of the board. The great duty of this board, to consist in forming, arranging, and bringing into operation, a system of order and economy for the navy, which would

remedy the defects and abuses now existing in that department. A board thus constituted would, I feel satisfied, reduce the expenses of the establishment at least one fourth.

I am, with much respect, sir, your obed't serv't,

STEPHEN DECATUR.

The above accords entirely with our opinion.

O. H. PERRY,

D. PORTER,

L. WARRINGTON.

Letter from captain Hull to the chairman of a committee of congress.

Navy yard, Portsmouth, Nov. 30, 1814.

SIR—I have had the honor to receive your letter of the 17th instant, covering a letter from the honorable the secretary of the navy to the senate of the United States, dated the 15th instant, communicating his views and plan of effecting a reform in the management of the naval department, and requesting my opinion thereon.

I now beg leave to inform you that I have examined the letter, and am of opinion that the plans *generally* proposed by the honorable secretary, are such as would, if carried into effect, go far towards effecting the object so much wished for, particularly as it respects the establishment of a navy board. It would be presumption in me to propose additions or alterations of a plan proposed by the honorable the secretary of the navy, with the knowledge he has of naval affairs, and the means he possesses of getting at the transactions of every branch of the establishment; I can, therefore, only say in general terms, that I think the changes in the naval establishment proposed by him, are such as will remedy many of the evils that now exist.

If, however, it is not thought absolutely necessary to make the proposed changes immediately, (and it would not be thought presumption in me,) I beg leave to suggest the idea of appointing *this* session, the gentlemen that are to compose the navy board, and let them enter immediately on the duties of that office. They, together with the honorable the secretary of the navy, would before the next meeting of congress, be able to lay before the senate a complete system for the reform of the establishment, founded on observations and facts taken from these gentlemen collectively. that may not be known or inquired into as individuals. If I dare give an opinion, these would be my sentiments. The board would have time to examine particularly into the establishment as it now is. They would be able, some of them, to visit the different naval establishments, and inform themselves of what improvements are necessary, and how far it will be expedient to occupy all the navy yards we now have, or rather, whether it will not be adviseable to fix on some two or three establishments as being important ones, and only improve the others for temporary purposes, such as repairing ships, or giving them an outfit when they fall in, and cannot without risk get to the larger establishments. In short, a board appointed immediately, and commencing on the duty of the office, would, in my opinion, as I have before stated, lay before the government a system, with such rules and regulations for the better government of our naval establishment, as cannot fail to meet their approbation, and I am sure such as will save millions to the nation if we are to have a navy of any magnitude. I have the honor to be, &c.

ISAAC HULL.

Hon. William Reed,
chairman of the naval committee.

Letter from captain Stewart to the chairman of a committee of congress.

United States' frigate Constitution,

Boston harbor, November 26, 1814.

SIR—I received the honor of your circular letter of the 17th instant, enclosing a report of the honorable secretary of the navy to the honorable senate of the United States, relating to the organization of the navy department. You express a desire that the committee may be possessed of my opinion of the plan proposed, and that I should suggest such additions and alterations as may appear to me necessary for attaining so desirable an object.

It appears to me, sir, and is my opinion, that the plan proposed by the report will contribute towards the desired end, but I do not think it calculated to obtain the whole object proposed by congress. Viewing it as an auxiliary to the navy department, it will, unquestionably, facilitate the operations, and relieve the officers of that department from much of the detail duties, which, all must be aware, are too extensive and diversified for any one person to discharge with necessary and due attention. We must also be aware how difficult it is to change a system once begun, and whose basis is not established on the best foundation, though it should afterwards be found inadequate to the object.

If we compare this new and young nation, rising in the western hemisphere, and progressing towards a zenith of greatness, which may cast a shade over some of the oldest and most enlightened nations of the eastern, to a young man commencing life with the experience of his predecessors, whereby to regulate his conduct and economy, would not his error strike us forcibly on observing him

erecting temporary structure after structure, instead of raising, on a solid foundation, the ground work of his future comfort and prosperity, which would bid defiance to time, and could only be shaken by the general wreck of things? Presuming the legislature wish to establish the marine of this country on the best possible foundation, and calculated to be conducted with the greatest economy in all its various branches, I do apprehend the plan submitted will not be found to effect that object, and will fall far short of the end contemplated.

Of the first section it will only be necessary to remark, that it would be injudicious to destroy the department, but highly essential to reorganize it.

The second section provides five inspectors of the navy, to form a sort of navy board, which will contribute no further than to relieve the department from some of the detail service, and sharing with it certain portions of the responsibility. The principal objection to a board of inspectors, constituted as I apprehend, arises from its not combining the variety and necessary practical knowledge and information among its members, requisite on many important subjects that will come before them.

The assigning to individuals of the board of inspectors, (as contemplated by the third section,) distinct control over, and responsibility for, specific portions of the service, can and will answer no purpose whatever.

The provisions of the fourth section will be highly essential at all events.

Section the fifth may or may not be requisite; in the latter case the office could, at any time, be created.

Sections six and seven will only be requisite if the plan is adopted.

As the principal features in the plan of the bill proposed, are contained in the section providing the board of inspectors, it will only be necessary to remark, in support of my objection above, that the duties contemplated to be assigned to this board would require, at least, one member in it conversant with each of the important branches of the establishment; the drawing up all the rules and regulations for each branch of the service; the examination of all the officers below the rank of masters commandant, for appointments or promotion; the adopting models for vessels of war to be created from; the planning and arranging their internal apartments; the external equipment and armament; the arranging the proper stores for a given time, for each department; the regulating dock yards, navy yards, founderies, &c. &c., demand the combined talents and professional experience of men conversant with the different professions. By referring to my letter of the 20. h January, 1813. to the honorable Langdon Cheves, you will observe by the plan of a board there proposed, that I had those objects in view, and therefore constituted it of such characters and professions as are essential to give every subject submitted to them a fair and professional examination. The above duties comprise almost the whole economy of the establishment, and form a subject of the first importance to the nation.

With respect to the flotilla, it ought either to form a part of the navy, and be subject to its rules, regulations, and economy, and be under the superintendence and control, generally, of the navy department and navy board, or else be entirely separated therefrom.

One great source of expenditure and inconvenience to the navy service arises from the short enlistment of our seamen, ordinary seamen, and boys, and the principal cause which would defeat any particular object or expedition of our marine, more so than any *imagined* deficiency of seamen. During part of our war with Tripoli, the crews were enlisted only for one year; the consequence was, that a ship could scarcely arrive at her station, and have time to organize her crew, before she was obliged to return and discharge them. The term of enlistment now is two years, but such is the difficulty of getting men for the small pay and bounty allowed, compared with what they can get in other service, and the ship is so long delayed in procuring her complement, that the times of one-half expire before the crew is completed. The inducements given to fill the ranks of the army being much greater than of the navy, many seamen have joined it; some, from necessity, have gone into foreign service, and are even navigating the commerce of the enemy; many are in the private armed ships and privateers, owing to the exclusive advantages given them over the navy; by this means the glory and maritime reputation of the nation is made to yield to the inglorious warfare of plunder, which deeply affects some individuals of the enemy, but makes only a small impression on the nation at large; some are locked up in the prisons of our foe, who is aware of the short period of their enlistment, and is wary enough to detain them from exchange until their term of service expires, when our government can no longer command their services. The frequency of changing men from the ship they select to cruise in to another, or into different service, such as the lakes and flotilla, contributes much to impede the

recruiting service. When the above causes are considered, it is only wonderful that any men can be procured for our ships of war. The registering and classing of the seamen of the United States, would produce much good, but the compulsory command of their services would produce much evil, and should only be resorted to in the most extreme necessity. None will serve so well as those who serve voluntarily; to this account may be placed much of our superiority over the British, which has hitherto baffled all their boasted advantages of *experience, skill, and long practice*.

With respect to a naval academy, the best school for the instruction of youth in the profession is the deck of a ship, presuming that none would be offered or received into the service as midshipmen, whose education had not been such as to fit them for officers, and calculated for gentlemen. To derive advantage from expenditure and induce that corps of officers to pursue their profession in time of peace, through private service, I would allow no half pay to midshipmen, except for such term as they can produce a journal of their voyage, and certificates of the master or owner of the vessel, countersigned by the collector of the port; by this means many will be induced to pursue that calling, to acquire the essential knowledge of seamanship; the properties of different species of vessels; an acquaintance and familiarity with coasts, countries, and nations; a knowledge of their marine, commerce, and fortresses; the genius of the people and their language; which would be essential to them as officers, and important to the nation. It would enable them to form a true estimate of the requisite force for the attack of any point, place, or object, and the seasons best calculated for expeditions and enter-

prises with the least hazard to themselves, when they should be called to execute the object, or plant the standard of our union over the humbled foe.

The love of country and patriotism of the seamen of the United States, stand unrivalled, or only equalled by their intrepidity and perseverance in commercial pursuits, and their valor in naval combat. We see them encountering all the horrors of the enemy's prisons, the privation of liberty and comfortable support, in preference to bearing arms against their country. Impressed (during a state of peace with us) on board the British ships of war, and by oppression compelled to serve them against other enemies, they submitted with patience to their misfortune, but when they heard of the war with their own country, no inducement or force could prevail on them to take arms against her. Sir, the navy looks up to the government with confidence for its fostering care, and the nation trusts that they will place this important and essential national force on a systematic and solid foundation, that it may progress to maturity by gradual and regular augmentation. Although it may present to the enemies of our country a front too formidable for them to penetrate, it never can be rendered a machine to menace the constitution or liberties of our country; it will at all times strengthen the arm of government, bind the union together, protect our coast and harbors from blockade, menace, or insult, our commerce from plunder, and our citizens from the slavery and dungeons of Barbary.

I have the honor to be, &c.

CHS. STEWART.

Letter from captain Morris to the chairman of a committee of congress.

Portsmouth, N. H. December 9th, 1814.

SIR—Your circular of November 17th, covering a letter from the secretary of the navy to the senate of the United States, I had the honor to receive a few days since.

The appointment of a board, for the assistance of the secretary of the navy, has long been advocated by the different commanders in service, upon the presumption that, with their advice and assistance, the naval force might be rendered much more efficient without an increased expense to the country. I should, however, suppose three persons sufficient, at this time, for the performance of all the duties of such a board. I cannot but think that part of the plan authorizing the president to appoint the presiding officer, as unnecessary or improper, since no other rule of precedence can be established among officers than that of rank. I should also presume that the naval officers possess that information on general naval subjects, and the particular details of service, which render them more peculiarly qualified for the duties of this board than persons whose attention has been generally devoted to other subjects.

The different duties assigned to the particular members of the board, as classed by the secretary, I should presume might be more advantageously distributed by the advice of the board itself after its organization. The appointment of a naval constructor would be attended with many advantages. That of a paymaster I should think unnecessary at present.

Anxious for the establishment of a board, composed of men whose vigilance and professional talents would enable them to discover and correct

abuses; to furnish all the information which might be required upon naval affairs; and to superintend the general police, and all those details of service which have hitherto necessarily interfered with the more important duties of the secretary, I am particularly gratified that it has been officially recommended at a time when the legislature are endeavoring to discover and reform the existing abuses of the naval establishment. The advantages which will naturally result from it, appear too obvious to require enumeration, but not the least important would be the information they could soon furnish the honorable committee of naval reform, upon the different subjects of their present inquiries.

I have the honor to be, &c.

C. MORRIS.

Honorable William Reed, chairman of the
committee of naval reform.

Letter from captain Shaw to the chairman of a committee
of congress.

Frigate United States, 9th December, 1814.

SIR—A few days since, I had the honor to receive your circular of the 17th ult. enclosing a letter from the secretary of the navy, transmitting a report relative to the better organization of the department of the navy of the United States.

From long experience, and so far as my knowledge extends of naval transactions, and to naval regulations, it has been but too obvious, that many imperfections have existed in the civil administration of our establishment, and that the only and best method that can be devised to remove the evil, will be to elect by law, a naval board, to consist of three post captains, (or of a higher

grade, if there should be such,) and that the secretary of the navy, where it may be deemed necessary in joint council, to be the presiding officer. This board of inspection, if well selected, I am perfectly satisfied will be enabled to give to our establishment a tone satisfactory in effect, and salutary in its operation. It will be to our navy its sheet anchor. All points of duty will be equally made explicit by its salutary and well defined regulations, and all untoward and unnecessary expenses, which have but too long continued to exist in our establishment, will, in a great measure, be brought to a final termination; when that object be obtained, the navy cannot do otherwise than progress, under the fostering care, which it is hoped the executive of the country will feel disposed to appreciate, agreeably to its consequences.

I have the honor to be, &c.

JOHN SHAW.

Hon. Wm. Reed.

Extracts of a letter from commodore Tingey, dated
Navy Yard, Washington, Dec. 10, 1814.

I have perused with attention the said report to the senate, and now proceed to give you my opinion on the several parts thereof, as the nature of the subject appears to me to require.

It has been long evident to every experienced officer in our navy, and experience has made it known to the community at large, that *no one man* (whatever his intellectual powers and endowments may be) is fully competent to execute the multiplicity of complex duties which have been incumbent on the head of the navy department.

Thus then, another branch of power in that department appears to have become indispensably

necessary, and none so appropriate, in my opinion, as a board of three or more experienced, practical, professional men.

Whether the appellation given to the board, in the report of Mr. Jones, is the most appropriate, it is considered unnecessary herein to discuss: but it is incontrovertibly demonstrable, that such a board, with proper powers, under an act of the legislature, will effect a saving of many thousand dollars annually, in the expenses of our naval establishment.

The secretary having presented his report in the form of a "bill," it may, I conceive, be found convenient to the committee, as well as to myself, to follow its sections in their regular course, with such a fair and candid opinion thereon, as their propositions appear more or less forcible and conclusive on my mind.

The first section, being totally indefinite and prospective, appears to be susceptible of no comment.

In the adoption of the second section, for the organization of the board, I conceive particular care should be taken to avoid any probable cause for disunion in its members. I would, therefore, respectfully advise, that the presiding member be designated by law, and not embarrass the president of the United States with the selection, which, from resignation, death, or other casualty, may very frequently occur; it appears to me more eligible, therefore, that the law should enact that the senior navy officer of the board, should be the presiding member; and being once so established, should continue so to act, as long as he remains a member thereof; notwithstanding any changes that might thereafter take place, by the supply of vacancies.

The board conjointly should have the power to nominate one or more persons, qualified for the duties of the secretary thereof, and submit such nominations to the president of the United States, for his selection and approval.

A quorum of the board, or at least the presiding member and its secretary, should reside at the seat of government of the United States, for the great convenience of frequent communications and conferences with the secretary of the navy, or with the president of the United States, in cases of particular importance. The board should hold its regular stated meetings, in its office at the seat of government, unless on emergency, or some important occasion, the secretary of the navy may deem it more eligible to be held elsewhere.

The duties of the secretary of the board, are clearly and amply defined in the "report," as well as is also, the powers of the board, for the establishment of its rules and the regulation of its proceedings, &c.

The third section appears to require some elucidation respecting the contemplated time or times, for holding each stated meeting of the board, as this section states that an abstract of the transactions of each such meeting shall be "transmitted *monthly* to the secretary of the navy" &c. Now the transmission of such "abstracts" *monthly*, would necessitate an almost perpetual session of the board, and perhaps such continual sitting of a quorum thereof, might be found imperative, especially in time of war; but otherwise, it is respectfully conceived, that after the first *complete* organization of the board, once in two or three months, will be sufficient for general stated meetings, and transmission of the transactions thereof to the secretary of the navy; thus affording time for a part

of the members to visit personally the several naval stations; which I conceive to be one of the most essential points of their duty. And if, as heretofore suggested, a quorum of the board, or at least the presiding member, and the secretary thereof, reside at and hold their office at the seat of government, the other members will be the better enabled to inspect the proceedings, at the different naval stations, or the equipment of any squadron or single ship, (if deemed necessary,) and report daily or otherwise, as may appear requisite, by correspondence, to the president of the board, or those executing the duties of the board, at the seat of government, who can immediately confer thereon with the secretary of the navy, or the president of the United States, if deemed essential, and thus a judgment may be formed whether or not it may be expedient for the presiding member, to convene the board earlier than the next approaching general stated meeting, or at any other port or place than their permanent office. Thus also, by this constant correspondence, the president of the board, with the aid of the secretary, will always have the business necessary for the consideration of the board, methodically arranged, and ready to lay before them immediately on their meeting.

On the 4th section I would only observe, that in my opinion, it would be more eligible that the *board* contemplated in the "report," should "prepare such rules and regulations for conducting the business of the constructor's department, as shall appear proper and necessary," and submit them for the approval of the president of the United States, through the secretary of the navy.

Letter from captain Evans to the chairman of a committee of congress.

Navy yard, Brooklyn, Dec. 6, 1814.

SIR—In compliance with the request of the committee appointed by the house of representatives, to inquire “into the expediency and practicality of reform in the management of the navy department of the United States,” I have examined, attentively, the letter from the secretary of the navy, which you did me the honor to transmit me, and my sentiments on the subjects it embraces, with such remarks as appear to me of weight, and applicable to those subjects, are respectfully submitted.

In examining the plan proposed by the secretary, I am at a loss to discover clearly his views, of the duties and powers that are to remain with the secretary of the navy, after the board he has recommended is in full operation. I assume it as admitted, that the duties and powers of that office are loosely defined now, and I consider it very important, if the office is continued with a board, that the extent of its operations should be clearly marked. If this is done, I believe the officer holding must possess but a small share of power, and his duties be very limited; or he must combine in himself the authority to direct and control the board in all cases. It will be considered scarcely worth while, I presume, to retain it for unimportant purposes; but if it be clothed with the extensive powers alluded to, it appears to me that ill consequences may easily arise from it, because the judgment of an individual who, it does not appear, must necessarily be conversant with naval affairs, may, and might frequently, be placed in competition with that of a board of five, who are selected expressly for their knowledge in those matters.

and with power to reject, modify, or render useless, their most important decisions. This power, I am persuaded, should be held by the president of the United States alone.

It is true, I believe, that with special and limited authority, vested by an act of congress, which would clearly define the powers and duties of the office, some benefit might be derived from it. I am decidedly of opinion, that the navy should be represented in the cabinet, if I may use the expression, and the office would, most probably, be of advantage for that purpose; but then if there is a board created as recommended, it appears to me, that the secretary of the navy should be more the advocate of that board, than the controller of it; he might also be serviceable as the organ of communication between the president of the United States and the board, and between the latter and congress, but here I think his labors should cease.

He should have no absolute control over either the civil or military department of the establishment. In the light, therefore, which I view the subject, it is manifest to me, that the benefits to be derived from the office, limited as above stated, would be of little importance, and could all be executed with equal advantage if it had no existence; but if it is to exist, with all the qualities of a directing and controlling power, I am of opinion, that the service would be much benefitted by the alteration of the second section proposed, so as to constitute a board of three, to be selected from the captains of the navy, and located at the seat of government. These would, most probably, be competent to the discharge of all the duties that would devolve on a board of this nature, under any circumstances that could arise, until our navy is considerably increased, when, it is to be presumed, the

number of members could be increased from the same materials.

I am averse to the introduction of gentlemen into a board of this description, that have lived principally in the merchants' service, who, however well they might be skilled in the duties devolving on mariners in general, cannot, I conceive, without distending the imagination, be supposed to be acquainted with the ramifications of a naval service, and who would, most probably, from these circumstances, rather retard and embarrass than be of advantage to it. If it is considered necessary to introduce other than naval officers in this board, I would greatly prefer their being selected from other classes of citizens, possessing sound judgment and extensive information, without regard to maritime qualifications. There are duties, perhaps, that would be allotted to a board of this nature, which gentlemen possessing those qualities could execute with advantage.

On the proposition to authorize the president to appoint a naval constructor, with assistants, I will only trouble the committee by observing, that an able naval architect could, I believe, be employed to advantage in the department; but I am of opinion, that more importance is proposed to be given to the office than is necessary or adviseable, and that this officer should be under the direction of the board.

The appointment of a paymaster, as proposed, would not, as far as I am enabled to judge, be attended with advantage to the service. It appears to me, that a well regulated system to govern the pursers, which it should be the duty of the board to prescribe, and the accountant's office as it now exists, is all that is necessary on this subject.

The establishment of a naval academy, as re-

commended, would unquestionably be productive of great advantage to the service; a well regulated establishment of this nature, I consider to be much wanted

These comprise all the objects that the secretary deems it necessary for the legislature to provide. I am of opinion, however, that there would be advantages obtained by extending the law, so as to define, as clearly as possible, the duties and powers of the board, and to designate the boundaries of the naval district

All the regulations recommended, I believe to be necessary and much wanted; but I am of opinion the emoluments of pursers had better be limited by law, and the distribution of the duties of the board would most probably be made with more advantage by the members of it.

Upon the whole, it is my opinion that the duties and powers of the secretary of the navy as they now exist, and all the duties and powers that it is necessary should be invested in a navy department, would be most advantageously settled in a board to consist of five members, and a secretary, one to be selected by the president for his abilities as a statesman, who should preside at the board, and the remaining four to be selected by the same authority from the officers of the navy. This plan would, I believe, combine all the qualities that are wanting to compose a navy department fundamentally efficient for the administration of a permanent and extensive naval establishment.

I have the honor to be,

With great respect, sir,

Your obedient servant,

SAMUEL EVANS.

Honorable William Reed, chairman
of the naval committee.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

